

WVU students interning at Biometrics Center

Three of seven from Harrison, Marion, Lewis counties

by Davin White
STAFF WRITER

CLARKSBURG — For the new interns at the Biometrics Fusion Center, the opportunity to work in an expanding high-tech field is a good step toward a career in biometrics security, engineering, computers or even law.

Their internships, granted via the federal government's Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), are an expansion of their studies at West Virginia University.

Three of the center's seven interns are from Harrison, Lewis and Marion counties. They are James Cann III of Bridgeport, Jennifer Smarr of Jane Lew and Scott Starn of Fairmont.

A position in biometrics — with its growth along the Interstate 79 High-Tech Corridor — also increases the likelihood these students will stay in West Virginia, they say.

Biometric security systems consider fingerprints, irises, facial features and other identifying marks of a person.

"I'd love to stay in state and work here," said Smarr, who is considering law school. She graduates next May.

A major in "biometric systems" is offered through WVU's College of Engineering and Mineral Resources.

Smarr is just as interested in "biometrics as the law," she said.



Submitted photo

West Virginia University students are getting 'a close-up look at biometric technologies in several business applications' as interns this summer at the Biometric Fusion Center in Clarksburg. Pictured, from left to right: David Lohman, deputy director of the center; interns Scott Starn, Jeff Simon, Jennifer Smarr, Amie King, Karla Buckel, James 'Jay' Cann III and Logan Stanley.

Her internship at the fusion center has "opened my eyes to the world of engineering."

"It gives you a good base for working with engineers," added WVU junior Logan Stanley.

And the area's growth in biometrics will allow him to stay in-state, he said.

Stanley, who will be a junior this fall, is a computer engineering and computer science major. Now, however, he is considering biometrics.

"As an out-of-state student ... no way I would've stayed in West Virginia," he said. "It's very good for the state."

Cann, a graduate of Bridgeport High School who finishes up at WVU in December, agreed.

"There's not a lot out there in biometrics," he said. "I think (West Virginia's) a great place to come and work and live. It's

going to be really fruitful in the future."

Without discussing specifics, the interns' job entails a "close-up look at biometric technologies in several business applications, ranging from knowledge management to equipment test and evaluation," according to a fusion center release.

This internship complements the students' classwork — which betters prepares them to work in the field.

At WVU, Cann and Smarr are old veterans while Stanley and Starn are still learning the ropes.

During his freshman year at WVU, Starn was enrolled in basic engineering classes.

In engineering, a focus on teamwork is paramount, the interns agreed.

In one class, the question was posed: "Can you produce some-

thing, and can you talk about what you've produced?"

Cann has experience with the more advanced biometrics classes, which emphasize concentration in physics, biology, electrical engineering and other sciences.

Recently, he worked with a team of students to create a unique biometrics product.

"We're taking an idea and seeing if we can create it — make it work," Cann said.

For Stanley, the engineering classes have just been a "big test" thus far.

"Those are the first; those are the hardest," Smarr pointed out.

Much to Stanley's chagrin, she added: "And junior (year) gets worse."

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